

FORESTRY NOTES



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National Association of
Conservation Districts

District working to improve Cleveland's tree canopy



Ohio's Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is in the early stages of work on a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project that would expand tree planting and landowner education on larger properties. It's part of a broader effort by the district, with help from government entities, to increase tree canopy in urban areas.

"If we can utilize this money to encourage people to plant trees because of the benefits of planting and growing trees, I think it can be done in many, many places," Cuyahoga SWCD Director Janine Rybka said. "The devil is in the details, and that's where we've got to get down to the root of how can we really get this growing, not just the trees, but the program."

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) awarded the district \$78,000 in 2018 for the three-year Greater Cleveland Reforestation Project. The RCPP project dovetails nicely with Cuyahoga SWCD's goals, the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County's urban forestry goals.

Last year, Cuyahoga SWCD planted about 500 trees, Rybka said. The district hosts tree planting events and educates landowners on proper ways to plant trees, best practices for mulching, the correct type of tree to plant for the specific urban location, and future care for the trees.

"We're the boots on the ground," Rybka said. "The typical urban tree has a life expectancy of six to seven years, so it isn't just about planting the tree, it is about growing trees. Our message is focused on long-term tree stewardship."

The district's urban forestry effort has grown over the course of a decade. In 2016, when awarded an urban agriculture grant from NACD, the district used the grant to hire someone part-time for urban agriculture programs. Connections were made with people who owned high tunnels, riparian tree plantings were done, and the district partnered with community development corporations about projects on vacant lots.



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Janine Rybka
Cuyahoga SWCD Director

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Workshop helps expand the network of agroforestry technical service providers



In September, the Washington State University (WSU) Extension, Oregon State University (OSU), the Pacific Northwest Agroforestry Working Group, and the USDA National Agro-

forestry Center hosted a workshop for natural resource professionals in Spokane, Wash., that focused on agroforestry in the region. Participants were primarily staff from conservation districts, but also included private consultants, state agency staff and extension professionals. Workshop speakers included staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), WSU Extension professionals, OSU faculty, U.S. Forest Service staff and employees from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

The workshop consisted of a day in the classroom, a day in the field and an optional day focused on the NRCS technical service provider (TSP) program. Classroom day top-

ics included windbreaks and shelterbelts, soil health, silvopasture and grazing management, pollinators in agroforestry systems, alley cropping, riparian buffer considerations, plant materials, and tribal nursery and agroforestry programs.

Throughout the day, the group identified ways that trees can be used to achieve landowner production and conservation goals, as well as provide public benefits. As a result of the workshop, 10 people are on the path to becoming NRCS technical service providers in agroforestry.

In Spring 2020, OSU, the WSU Extension and the Pacific Northeast Agroforestry Working Group will hold another workshop in Oregon in partnership with the National Agroforestry Center.

ON THE WEB



Engaging your state forestry agency for urban and community forestry

A recent NACD Urban and Community Conservation webinar focused on urban forestry. National Association of State Foresters Communications Director Whitney Forman-Cook discussed how conservation districts are able to interact with state forestry agencies across the nation on community forestry issues, including through state forest action plans. Rachel Ormseth from the South Dakota Department of Agriculture Resource Conservation and Forestry Division and Cindy Zenk from the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts shared their experiences working together to address urban and community forestry concerns and support educational outreach.

To view this webinar, go to the NACD website at nacdnet.org and search 'engaging your state forestry agency.'



FORESTRY BRIEFS

Workshop engages all levels of woodland owners

Late September, West Virginia landowners gathered for a forest field day at the farm of Floyd Kursey, Eastern Panhandle Conservation District/Berkeley County supervisor. The day-long event focused on forest health, management, and safety. Special sessions focused on the installation and maintenance of riparian buffers and the use of drones to manage woodlots. Participants ranged from lifelong woodland owners to those who were just getting started.

"We were excited to have over 60 people attend, some as far as two-and-a-half hours away," Heather Duncan, Eastern Panhandle Conservation District education and outreach specialist said. "We're hoping this leads to more active management of woodlots here in West Virginia, and for those who attended to connect with our NRCS and Department of Forestry partners to learn about available programs."

This workshop was held in partnership with West Virginia Department of Forestry, Eastern Panhandle Conservation District, West Virginia Conservation Agency, West Virginia Depart-

ment of Agriculture, Berkeley County Council, NRCS, USDA-APHIS, Timberland Consulting, Agronomy Air, Shenandoah Services, LLC.

Reducing wildfire risk in Kittitas County

This fall, a series of machines worked through the forest near the Buffalo Springs area in Upper Kittitas County, in an effort to reduce fuels that contribute to wildfires.

The four-month project is being applied to approximately 120 acres of land managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). TNC's Director of Forest Restoration and Fire Reese Lolley said the organization has restored approximately 550 acres of forest stand conditions within the Central Cascades since 2015.

Lolley said the work being done helps answer a question that has become more commonly asked as wildfire seasons become longer and more intense. In an interview with the Yakima Herald, Lolley asked, "How do we better put together treatments near communities that will help reduce the risk and make better situations for first responders, and for firefighters to manage fires?"

The effort aims to connect landowners with entities such as the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Kittitas Conservation District to not only create a healthier forest, but to have a plan of attack for wildfires when they happen.

Forestry Notes Q&A

Jad Daley,
President & CEO, American Forests



Jad Daley is the President and CEO of American Forests, the nation's oldest forest conservation organization founded in 1875. Daley has a long record of leadership in the forest community, including co-founding the Forest-Climate Working Group, which he continues to co-chair, and leading the 22-state Eastern Forest Partnership. Daley has also played a lead role in authoring multiple pieces of federal legislation for forests, including the enabling language for the U.S. Forest Service's Community Forest Program and Community Wood Energy Program, both enacted as part of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Daley's writing has been featured in media outlets such as The Washington Post, New York Times and Huffington Post. He is a graduate of Peddie School, Brown University and Vermont Law School. Recently, he sat down with NACD to discuss a number of topics.

You've been busy this past year promoting forestry as a tool to combat climate change. You penned an op/ed for The Hill with former USDA Undersecretary Robert Bonnie this summer, and recently, you spoke at the Climate Action Summit. How is this message being received?

Extremely well. I often say that we have crossed a tipping point in terms of "forests for climate." It seems increasingly well-settled that forests are a key to solving climate change, and this crosses political boundaries and other lines in our country.

What is less settled is what this means. We put a lot of energy into the message that working forests and wood products are the "engine room" of carbon sequestration in our forests. This is counterintuitive for most people who assume that forests for climate is just about letting forests grow. These folks don't appreciate the distinction between carbon storage (carbon already stored), current rates of sequestration, and the role of wood products in storing carbon and reducing emissions from manufacturing.

We also find that many people don't realize the impact climate change is already having on

forests in terms of declining forest health, and therefore, the importance of management and restoration to deal with these increasing challenges. We call this forest health work "carbon defense" to help make the point that keeping forests healthy prevents emissions from mortality and wildfire. This is just as important as increased sequestration.

Do you believe enough Congressional leaders understand the role forestry can play in combating climate change? What is your organization doing to help make that connection?

We see a rapid growth curve in understanding that varies a lot by committee and member. For example, the Agriculture Committees in the House and Senate have been thinking a lot about these issues and are very well versed. Other committees that have been more focused on traditional climate issues like clean energy are just getting up to speed.

Across the board, we see strong support for actions like tree planting, which are easy to understand in terms of carbon gains and what we need to do. It is a longer and more complex conversation to see members of Congress and staff embrace concepts like thinning fire-prone forests for long-term carbon gains and the complexities of climate adaptation in forests as carbon defense.

Perhaps most encouraging is the Climate Stewardship Act (S. 2452 and H.R. 4652) that would invest billions in forest sector activities, including tree planting, forest management for carbon, wood products utilization, and workforce development with low-income communities.

Conservation districts in many parts of the country, particularly those in northeastern states, are heavily engaged in reforestation efforts. What advice would you give to NACD and conservation districts in providing assistance to broader reforestation efforts? We are fully committed to "Reforest America." This is a no regrets climate investment,



Jad Daley

from wildfire-prone forests to areas impacted by pests to former agricultural lands ready to come out of production.

Conservation districts have a huge role to play through technical assistance, facilitating cost-share and even just helping to identify suitable areas.

This is a total partnership effort, and conservation districts have a huge role to play through technical assistance, facilitating cost-share and even just helping to identify suitable areas. One of American Forests' most key partners in reforestation is the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District in California, where we are replanting burned over areas in the San Bernadino Mountains.



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Cleveland's tree canopy from page 1

The Sustainable Cleveland 2019 plan identified restoring the urban tree canopy as one of its goals. A 2012-2013 tree canopy assessment noted the canopy at 19 percent and falling, in part due to diseases, pests like emerald ash borer, and the lack of replacing lost trees. In addition, the American Lung Association rated Cleveland as the ninth-worst metropolitan area for air quality. The Cleveland Tree Coalition was established to help combat further loss.

"One of the things identified early on was the need for trees and green environment," Rybka said. "In an urban environment, there's a multitude of benefits trees provide – slowing down water, keeping streams cleaner and cooler by reducing erosion, providing habitat, helping with air quality, and increasing property values."

Earlier this year, the Cuyahoga County Executive announced a \$5 million commitment

over the next five years to increase the canopy to 30 percent. This fall, Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson announced an additional \$10 million for the city's Urban Forestry Program. This district is providing technical assistance for these initiatives.

Communication with communities within the county has led to greater public involvement, educational programming and working on various conservation programs. Educating, planting and monitoring how trees are planted has been a great way to engage the public, Rybka said.

"There's a lot of territory to cover," she said. "We have excellent participation in our tree-related programs, and with the RCPP funding, we have the ability to reach out to larger landowners to help grow the urban forest. I'm convinced we can develop a program that will serve as a model to bring more NRCS funds for use in urban areas."

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CALENDAR

Feb. 8-12, 2020 – NACD Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, Nev.

Visit <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/annual-meeting>

Feb. 12-16, 2020 – NWTF Convention & Sport Show, Nashville, Tenn.

Visit <http://www.nwtf.org/convention>

May 12-14, 2020 – WFLC/CWSF Spring Meeting, Manhattan, Kan.

Visit <https://www.westernforesters.org/events/wflccwsf-spring-meeting>

July 18-21, 2020 – NACD Summer Conservation Forum and Tour, Bismarck, N.D.

Visit <https://www.nacdnet.org/news-and-events/summer-meeting>